DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 773 CE 041 176

AUTHOR	Butler, Erik Payne; And Others
TITLE	The Literacy-Employment Equation. Education for Tomorrow's Jobs. A Policy Options Monograph.
INSTITUTION	Far West Lab. for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, Calif.; Network of Innovative Schools, Inc., Andover, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	85
CONTRACT	400-83-0056; NIE-R-83-000-11
NOTE	35p.; For related monographs, see CE 041 175-179. Product of the National Adult Literacy Project.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Basic Skills; Community Services; Cooperation; *Credentials; Dropouts; *Educational Attainment; *Education Work Relationship; Employment Programs; Employment Qualifications; Job Training; Literacy; Public Education; *Public Policy; School Business Relationship; School Districts; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Job Training Partnership Act 1982; National Adult Literacy Project

ABSTRACT

The resurgence of public interest in education highlights the connection between education and employment success. The emphasis on excellence puts concommitant pressure on the other end of the spectrum--remediation programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), a program that mandates closer collaboration between the public and private sectors. Research on education and employment demonstrates the link between educational attainment and successful employment, though there is little agreement on how best to measure basic skills and how competency factors operate in the labor market. The employment impact of lack of basic skills upon functionally illiterate adults cannot be denied. Therefore, improvements in local practice and in Federal and state policy are imperative. At the local level, JTPA-funded programs can expand the focus on basic skills and literacy, increase services to dropouts and adults, devise meaningful credentials jointly agreed upon by educators and employers, and create coherent systems of local services to improve input (assessment and program assignment) and output (credentialling and outplacement). Federal policymakers can enhance coordination and collaboration by providing: a multistate overview of policies and practices, leverage through initiative and regulation, financial resources to attack problems on a large scale, visible cooperative leadership through the Departments of Labor and Education, and technical assistance. (SK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED263773

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

THE LITERACY – EMPLOYMENT EQUATION
EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW'S JOBS

A Policy Options Monograph

Kirk Payne Butler
Andrew Hahn
with
James Darr

NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT
THE CENTER FOR LITERACY

THE LITERACY-EMPLOYMENT EQUATION

EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW'S JOBS

A POLICY OPTIONS MONOGRAPH

Written by:

Erik Payne Butler

Andrew Hahn

With
James Darr

NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY PROJECT
a joint project of

FAR WEST LABORATORY and The NETWORK, Inc.
1985

CE0 411176

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Contract No. 400-83-0056 of the National Institute of Education. It does not, however necessarily reflect the views of that agency.

This essay, The Literacy-Employment Equation, Education for Tomorrow's Jobs: A Policy Options Monograph is one of four monograph papers commissioned by the National Adult Literacy Project (NALP), a joint project of the Far West Laboratory and The NETWORK, Inc., sponsored by the National Institute of Education. NALP is one component of President Reagan's (1983), Initiative on Adult Literacy. The Initiative was designed to promote collaboration between the public and private sectors in order to offer literacy training more effectively and economically to those who seek and need it. The other monographs in the series are titled: Giving Literacy Away: Alternative Strategies for Increasing Adult Literacy Development, Training Capacity and Program Participation; Television Technologies in Combating Illiteracy; and Promoting Innovation and Controversy in Adult Basic Education: Section 309 of the Adult Education Act.

FAR WEST LABORATORY FOR
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Contract No. NIE-R-83-000-11 of the National Institute of Education. It does not, however, necessarily reflect the views of that Agency.

PREFACE

This essay for the National Adult Literacy Project was designed to help policy planners and program operators link literacy remediation programs to employment training strategies. The report presents options for new policies and programs.

The essay was commissioned by the National Adult Literacy Project. The authors are grateful for the invitation to participate in the NALP and thank Dr. Rene Lerche of The NETWORK, Inc. for her assistance. The authors are responsible for any errors and for the opinions expressed throughout the text.

The authors are involved in a number of projects related to policy and program assistance in the field of employment training and literacy for the disadvantaged. These projects are located in the Center for Human Resources, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University. Three recent reports by the authors served collectively as the spring board for this essay. We therefore acknowledge the following colleagues: Robert Lerman who wrote with Andrew Hahn, What Works in Youth Employment (forthcoming book by the National Planning Association); James Darr and Paul Osterman who wrote with Andrew Hahn, Getting 100 Percent Results from Education Set-Aside under the Jobs Training Partnership Act (for the National Governors Association); James Darr who wrote with Erik Butler, Re-Examining the Federal Experience with Youth Programs: What Are The Managerial Lessons? (for the National Academy of Science). The authors are particularly grateful to James Darr for his JTPA summary and some of the program options described in this text. We would like to thank Helen Hemminger, a Brandeis graduate student, for assisting us with some field interviews with local literacy practitioners. Finally, Ms Barbara McKay and Ms Diane Kelly are thanked for their top-notch production skills.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE i

INTRODUCTION 1

THE POLITICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC CONTEXT: Education and the Job Training Partnership Act 3

Public Education in the 80's 3

The Job Training Partnership Act 5

State and Local Connections 6

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT: Starting With What is Known and What is Believed . . 9

The Attainment/Employment Connection 9

What is Behind the Basic Skills-Work Connection 13

TOWARD A NEW AGENDA. Basic Skills Policy for the Next Decade 17

Improving and Focusing Local Practice 17

EXPAND THE FOCUS IN BASIC SKILLS AND LITERACY 17

Increase Services to Dropouts and Adults 18

Devise Outcome-Directed Approaches and Meaningful Credentials . . . 20

DEVISE COHERENT SYSTEMS OF LOCAL SERVICES 21

Refining Federal Policy and Increasing Resources 23

Program Linkages in One City - The Practitioners' Perspective . . . 24

REFERENCES 28

INTRODUCTION

Are America's students being taught the skills they need to be mature citizens and productive workers? Is technology changing the workplace forever, and too quickly for current and new employees to keep pace? Can functionally illiterate youth overcome high unemployment rates and join the mainstream of the American economy? If John and Martha and Hector and Althea can't read, will they be able to work? Do effective systems exist for teaching and training them when they are young? As adults? Is there an effective backstopping system if we miss them first time around?

Concern about public education and the way it may affect our nation's economy has moved to the forefront of public policy. It is one theme that weaves consistently through the glittering names and glossy reports on education in the last two years. Whereas Sputnik's launch spurred renewed interest in science education in the 50's, several factors seem to bring us to the current emphasis on education for employment. First, increasing international interdependence and competition has removed the insulation around our economy. We worry that we will not be able to compete, and that the productivity of our nation's human resources will diminish. Second, technology, and fears about the changes in the workplace that may result, forces a look at the systems which prepare people for work. We worry that current employees may not be able to learn fast enough to adapt and that future employees are learning too few of the right things. Third, while the United States has outperformed the world in creating jobs--over twenty million new jobs in the last ten years--the jobs are distributed unevenly, at the expense of minority groups, especially youth. We worry that we are creating a large, under-educated, unemployed, and possibly unemployable underclass.

Underlying these fears is a determined belief in the value of education and faith that somehow, if we can only think about it right, education can help. Even the most unkind things said about education are said in the hope of making it work better. The recent national education reports may best be regarded not as criticisms but as a kind of consensual process of re-affirming the centrality of education to the American social-and economic-enterprise. The interplay between the preparing or "producing" systems--chiefly educational institutions and employment training programs, and "consuming" systems--employers-has become more complicated and active. More and more scholars and policymakers are considering questions which explore and help explain poorly understood relationships, and more business people are seeing the issue as fundamental to their corporate interests and the interests of the general economy.

In this crowded context, we present here an agenda for new programs and new policies designed to enrich our understanding of the real connections between education and work, and to strengthen the connections which already exist. Before presenting the recommendations and the context in which they fit, however, a couple of caveats are in order.

First, our focus is on the specific connections between the "basic skills" goals and outcomes of education and training for the work place, not on the broader relationship of education and work.

Second, our particular experience is with remediation programs and research, drawing us particularly to the interests of the educationally and economically disadvantaged, the functionally illiterate with complex barriers to successful employment. Third, we have a particular-though not exclusive-interest in adolescents and young adults. Moreover, less good research has been done about the employment related needs and experiences of older adults, and more research and demonstration has focused on programs and outcomes for youth.

Finally, while we believe major new initiatives would help, we will focus primarily on linkages, relationships and cooperation among current initiatives to succeed. We are convinced that the most useful innovations in the next several years will spring from local practice, with federal support following, rather than the reverse. Accordingly, our policy recommendations will focus on enabling policies, rather than on Washington-dreamed innovation.

We begin first with the political and programmatic context in which educators and employment and training professionals find themselves, and which policymakers must understand. A discussion of the research context begins with what we know so far about the basic skills/employment connections, stressing that much more needs to be discovered. Finally, beginning principles for local program linkage and operations and moving to a discussion of policy changes which can enable local innovation to begin and continue, we present an agenda for programs and policy.

THE POLITICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC CONTEXT:

Education and the Job Training Partnership Act

Public Education in the 80's

Education has suddenly become the hottest domestic policy issue of the 1980's. A decade which began with major reductions in federal assistance and an escalating number of state tax limitation initiatives has turned to a search for ways to support and improve education--even if it costs more money. The 1980's have seen a rush of reports from prestigious panels critizing the quality of American education, yet the result has not been loss of support, but rather an explosion in state and local support of initiatives to improve schools.

Forty-six states have enacted or proposed new legislation to reform education in public elementary and secondary schools. The plans range from teacher recruitment and training efforts to "upgrade" education at all levels. In North Carolina, "Centers of Excellence" promote education and research in cutting-edge technologies. In Kentucky, the commissioner of education can declare a local district "bankrupt" if it does not meet certain objective performance measures in three years. New Jersey's new teacher certification laws permit experts in subject matter areas quick entree into the classroom, while Tennessee has established a five-step career ladder which can give teachers incentives from $500 to $7,000 (Action in the States, 1984).

Why such a revival of interest in education? First, there is a growing perception that schools have declined in quality in the last twenty years. Led by A Nation at Risk (1983), from the President's Commission on Excellence in Education, a series of reports has taken educators to task for everything from the amount of homework to teacher sick leave policies. Nearly twenty years of declining scores on the Scholastic Aptitude tests encouraged the fear by parents, business leaders, and elected officials that schools had become so tangled in webs of bureaucracy that they no longer produced graduates capable of competing with the best.

There is a second explanation for the rise in interest in schooling: a growing belief that techological and economic changes have increased the value of academic skills. Tougher competition from overseas in basic industries like steel and cars, the proliferation of computers in offices and homes, and emergence of new industries, such as genetic engineering, all have spurred a re-examination of the role of education. In an era of information--a "knowledge economy"--basic academic skills are the passports to economic success. The connection between education and employment has gained new strength and has been the impetus to many of the promising educational initiatives around the country.

This connection is echoed at all points on the spectrum, but is

especially profound for those who do not finish school or who lack basic skills. Research on youth has shown that high school graduates earn sixty percent more than non-graduates in their first ten years after graduation. High school dropouts are nearly three times as likely to be unemployed as graduates (Sum, Andrew, et al., 1983). Two-thirds of all the economically disadvantaged people in the nation--the group targeted by the Job Training Partnership Act--lack high school diplomas. For blacks, the higher the achievement test scores, the greater their employment--as much as fourteen percent more weeks of employment for each level above the mean (National Council on Employment Policy, 1983).

The employment and economic connections with education have led to another practical reason for the resurgence of interest in education. Put simply, these connections have risen in importance because of the role business people have played in the commissions and panels which have reviewed them. Public/private partnership is the buzzword of the 80's, and whether those partnerships will endure or not in practice, they have certainly set the stage for debate. The Commission on Excellence, the Commission on Education and Economic Growth (of the Education Commission of the States, 1983) and several other national groups started with a large degree of economic impetus, and focused on economic and employment issues as an overriding principle.

Nor has this impetus been only national. In Minnesota and California, business groups have helped analyze the needs of education and have lobbied on behalf of reform proposals. Action-oriented business partnerships have flourished, especially in larger cities whose school populations include many children from poor and minority families. In the District of Columbia's public system, five "career high schools" are being sponsored by corporations. In Dallas, 1000 companies are paired with nearly 200 public schools, while in Kansas City, a group of major firms is training school administrators in leadership skills.

The buzzword of statewide reform criteria is "excellence". Missouri's new plan is "Reaching for Excellence"; Pennsylvania's is "An Agenda for Excellence"; and Alabama's is "A Plan for Excellence". The thrust for school improvement toward "excellence" creates a positive climate addressing the educational challenges of the next decade. Clearly, criticisms of education have struck home, and are motivating. To modify the axiom, "where you stand depends on where you sit", in education it is, "what you see depends on where you look".

A look at the general picture of public education in this country, reveals reason for optimism. A higher percentage of Americans will receive high school diplomas this year than ever before. More Americans complete high school than do citizens of any other country. Test scores have begun to reverse the trend of recent decades. SAT scores are up and achievement on standardized reading and math tests has improved in thousands of school districts. Recent comparisons of the top ten percent of American college students with the elite of foreign universities show that the Americans more than hold their own. The education system has not failed (A Nation at Risk, 1983).

On the other hand, despite the overall success of the educational system, there are nearly thirty million Americans who are functionally illiterate, that is, who do not have the degree of competence required to master the demands of many jobs and many life situations. Between 700,000 and one million young people drop out of high school each year. A disproportionate share of the educationally deficient are poor, are immigrants, or are minorities. Unemployment among black youth is three times that of white youth, and the gap has grown steadily wider (Hahn, and Lerman, in press).

What will the move towards "excellence" mean? For those at the upper end of the educational scale, it may mean the opportunity to employ their skills in lucrative and exciting careers. The success of the American economy in international competition may rest on our ability to generate such excellence. At the same time, substantial numbers of Americans will fall further behind academically and economically unless steps are taken to move them back into the classroom, from illiteracy to basic skills, and from marginal jobs into decent careers.

While most of the statewide initiatives will benefit the majority of the students, their broad-brush approaches tend to leave others out. Many workers displaced by technological innovation; refugees from political repression; women re-entering the workforce; or high school dropouts will not benefit automatically from generalized improvement, even if it occurs. People with severe educational deficits are clustered in the poorer urban and rural areas, yet few of the state initiatives are targeted on those areas. Thirty eight states have new programs for gifted and talented students, while only seventeen have new programs for dropouts. Many states are imposing new graduation requirements and competency exams, but only a handful, such as Ohio and New York, are subsidizing the cost of remediation for people unable to pass those tests (Education Commission of the States, 1983). The remediation needs of some groups exceed the scope of many of the new initiatives and invites collaboration with other resources. Despite its own limitations, no other public program is better suited for this role than the Job Training Partnership Act--the nation's remediation system for the poor.

The Job Training Partnership Act

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) went into effect in October of 1983. It replaces the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and, though it was by no means a wholesale renovation of CETA, it contains many new features and new opportunities for collaboration with education institutions. JTPA is intended to be a partnership between the public and private sectors at both the state and local levels. Its ambition is to remedy the employment problems of the nation's poor, disadvantaged, and unemployed people.

There are four major differences between JTPA and the federal job training efforts which preceeded it. First, it is not a wage subsidy or income transfer program. CETA and the Manpower Development and Training Act before it, were meant to focus on education and training, but they became

the anchor for a fleet of programs which tried to address income and job deficiencies directly, through large subsidies to local governments. Regardless of their merits, these programs often were regarded as makework and prevented CETA from realizing its educational goals.

Second, JTPA gives to states a major new policy and planning role. CETA was federally administered and states were marginal players in that system. Under JTPA, governors have substantial powers, from appointing the State Job Training Coordinating Council to proposing boundaries for some Service Delivery Areas to setting criteria for coordination between JTPA and other aspects of public policy. Since JTPA is also meant to stimulate local leadership and respond to local needs, the governors are not given complete control of the system. JTPA, in practice, is a partnership between the state and local government. One ostensible reason for this design was to ease the way for better collaboration with education, also primarily a state/local function.

Third, JTPA allows states and localities to engage in a broad variety of programs, but it requires that these programs be measured by their outcomes. The performance standards of JTPA have elicited some controversy, though rarely from the employers who sit on the JTPA policy councils. The demand for accountability in JTPA programs, along with the incentives which governors can offer to reward performance, find parallels in education where both the entire systems as well as individual students and teachers are increasingly expected to demonstrate their competence.

Finally, JTPA has given the private sector a significant governance and policymaking role in job training. Each JTPA administrative unit must form a private industry council (certified by the governor) which has a business majority and a business chair. These PICs make JTPA unique among federal programs in having formal business oversight and they offer a chance for the employment and training system to build a strong foundation of support among their most important consumers: the companies which can hire their graduates. Since educational institutions have also been reaching out aggressively to the business community, there is great potential for linking the partnership of JTPA with the needs of local education.

State and Local Connections

In the broadest sense, JTPA is an educational program, for it seeks to provide people with the language, vocational, attitudinal, and other skills they need to gain unsubsidized employment. It differs from other educational efforts because of its close ties to the labor market and because of its concentration on people who have fallen through the cracks of mainstream institutions. JTPA does not create a separate system of services, however; it relies on leveraging services from schools, community agencies, colleges, and others with educational expertise.

Several surveys indicate that the largest role played by local education systems in JTPA is as a contractor or service provider. Seventy percent of JTPA agencies (SDAs) use schools in this capacity, making them the single most

widespread type of contractor (Walker-Grinkler Associates, 1984). This accords with the legislation's injunction to PICs to give priority to qualified educational agencies. In addition, the law requires that forty percent of each jurisdiction's funds be spent on people under the age of twenty-two. Since this is the normal target group of secondary and post secondary schools, it is not surprising that education agencies dominate this level of JTPA service.

There are two other important roles that educators play in JTPA. First, the law mandates that educators serve as members of both local PICs and the State Job Council. In practice, this varies widely, but it often means that there are representatives of both public high schools or vocational schools and colleges on PICs. This gives them a forum in which to express the needs and concerns of the educational community. It also allows them to influence the policies of the Private Industry Council and, hence, the total JTPA system. The degree of influence will depend on the structure of the PIC and on the leadership of the educational representatives. Since most PICs are still in their early stages, climbing deliberately up the learning curve, there is ample opportunity for better linkage through this policy role. Indeed, given the attraction which schools hold for business, the private sector majority of PICs may on its own seek closer ties with schools.

Second, the governor has the power to establish criteria under which local JTPA entities must coordinate with other groups concerned with employment issues. These coordination criteria are important policy tools and most states will use them to promote links between the JTPA system and educational institutions. The membership of education officials on State Job Councils can stimulate and guide the development of such criteria.

The JTPA system then provides several roles for educators and educational agencies. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. There is no doubt that the history of cooperation between local and state education agencies and federal employment programs has often been negative. The tension in the relationship is often attributed to structural features of one system or the other.

For example, the federal fiscal year of CETA was an obstacle to collaboration with schools operating on school calendars. While such things were constraints, there are deeper reasons for distrust. Educators see the very existence of an effort like JTPA as an implied criticism of education. Isn't JTPA aimed at school dropouts, adult illiterates, and people without marketable skills? Isn't it the purpose of education to provide these skills? For their part, administrators of federally funded job training programs have often been advocates for underserved groups and have often ignored the educators' mission "to serve all".

Changes have taken place which suggest a more promising future for this collaboration. The drastic reduction in funds for federal job training, forces state and local policymakers to collaborate with other groups if they are to accomplish their goals. The presence of business locally and the governor statewide in new policy roles means that the JTPA system is plugged into leadership with few biases about the CETA past. Schools themselves have

become more responsive to ideas for change, especially in the urban areas where poverty and illiteracy are such visible companions. And the new Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, renewing and modifying the Vocational Act of 1976, provides for explicit collaboration with JTPA and promises more services for the economically disadvantaged. Above all, the economic value of education has changed. It is no longer possible for either schools or employers to isolate themselves. Neither school nor JTPA leaders can afford to let the past define their futures.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT.

Starting With What is Known and What in Believed

There is a growing body of research in education, skills development, employment and economic growth. Unfortunately, much of the work considers each phenomenon in isolation from every other; only a few efforts have focused on either the broad connections or particular relationships among all these factors. Moveover, much of what does exist produces only statistical, not causal conclusions, which are less useful for program and policy decisions than one might wish (JOBSTART, 1985). This brief section will focus only on two of these areas: 1) the connection between education attainment and employment, and 2) the connections between basic skills competency and job performance.

The Attainment/Employment Connection

Despite a cynicism about the real worth of a high school diploma in the marketplace, its practical importance has grown dramatically in the last two decades. This is revealed most clearly by a variety of studies of the labor market experience of those lacking high school diplomas. Consider the following facts from Andrew Sum's (1984) review:

- Persons lacking a high school degree comprise almost two-thirds of all economically disadvantaged people in the nation.

- High school dropouts comprise approximately one-third of all unemployed JTPA eligible clients.

- The advantage of a high school degree has doubled since the 1960s. For example, between 1965-1969, high school graduates, not enrolled in school, were 30 percent more likely to be employed than dropouts. By 1983, the gap had widened to a 61 percent advantage.

- Each year of schooling now adds 4.5-6.0 percent in hourly wages to an average of over six weeks per year in employment for young men. For young women, a high school diploma results in an increase of 18-20 percent in hourly earnings and adds seven additional weeks of full time employment.

- Dropping out has different effects for different groups. White high school dropouts are more likely to find jobs on the average than are black high school graduates and have roughly the same level of unemployment as black youth with some college education. Black high school dropouts suffer the most severe labor market hardship (Sum, 1984).

In 1983, between 11 and 16 percent of the adult labor force was non-high school graduates. In 1981, 30 percent of U.S. 18 year olds did not graduate from high school. Estimates vary on the high school dropout rate, but the "whole number" figure is somewhere between 700,000 and one million youth per year.

The consequences stemming from early school leaving are severe. Persons attaining eight or fewer years of education are three times more likely to be "economically disadvantaged" (and elgible for JTPA) than persons graduating high school. And dropouts are twice as likely as high school graduates to be poor (Sum, 1984). While it may be true that educational quality has declined, and that the high school diploma has been "de-valued", it is also a fact that employers--in their behavior--have increased their reliance on the credential for hiring for entry level work.

Table 1, by the National Commission on Employment Policy, shows two converging trends in this connection: first, the last decade has witnessed a dramatic overall increase in unemployment among high school dropouts as compared to graduates; and second, there has been a corresponding widening of the gap between blacks and whites--in unemployment, in employment/population ratio, but not in the participation rate.

Table 1

Employment indicators of high school graduates not enrolled in college and of school dropouts, 16 to 24 years old; October 1974-1982.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES NOT ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

	Labor Force Participation Rate		Employment Rate		Employment/ Population Ratio	
Year of Graduation	White	Black 1/	White	Black 1/	White	Black 1/
1974	84.4	73.2	14.6	38.8	72.1	44.8
1975	82.5	70.9	17.1	42.7	68.5	40.2
1976	85.8	70.5	15.0	45.0	72.9	39.2
1977	86.8	74.6	13.0	42.1	75.4	43.2
1978	87.7	75.9	10.4	40.0	78.5	45.5
1979	88.2	72.3	13.9	39.1	76.0	43.5
1980	87.3	71.0	14.8	51.7	74.4	34.8
1981	86.4	69.3	17.1	53.5	71.6	32.2
1982	84.6	69.3	21.4	58.0	66.5	29.1
SCHOOL DROPOUTS						
Year						
1973-74	70.5	55.2	26.1	38.8	52.1	33.7
1974-75	63.7	58.2	27.8	61.9	46.1	22.2
1975-76	67.2	44.2	27.3	55.7 2/	48.8	19.6
1976-77	71.5	58.1	23.7	42.9	54.6	33.1
1977-78	72.0	59.1	27.4	33.7	52.1	39.2
1978-79	68.6	53.2	22.8	45.2	52.9	29.1
1979-80	67.7	50.4	26.9	56.6	49.5	21.9
1980-81	68.6	46.4	29.0	73.1	48.7	12.5
1981-82	67.1	51.9	36.0	71.4 2/	42.9	14.8

Note. From A youth employment policy: Background for discussion (p. 7) by Johnson, J. 1977, National Commission on Employment Policy, Washington, DC.

1/ Beginning in 1977, data are for blacks only. Prior to 1977, data are for blacks and others.
2/ Percentages calculated. BLS did not report because base was less than 75,000.

Researchers rely on formal studies but employers know about the work-education connection from daily experience. Numerous employer surveys reveal the belief that educational credentials are essential for most entry level jobs. Business task forces of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, Northeast-Midwest National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, American Council of Life Insurance, the Center for Public Resources, and the National Alliance of Business have all called for a strong basic skills foundation, along with combinations of basic skills remediation and work experience or vocational education. Even the government's Congressional Budget Office (1982), issued a stinging report calling for improvements in education as the best route to positive labor market outcomes for the disadvantaged.

One report by an employer group assembled by the National Academy of Science asserts that even in the first jobs held by young people, a high school degree matters greatly (National Academy of Science, 1984). For example, the NAS shows that in 1982 non-high school graduates found fewer jobs in wholesale, retail, and the service sectors. As the average age of the population rises, more women and minority group members will compete for these entry-level positions.

In 1979, a White House-led review of youth programs fundamentally changed course when groups of employers in five cities reported much more interest in educational attainment and basic skills knowledge than in teenage work experience as preparation for employment in their firms (Butler, and Darr, 1979).

Moreover, employer surveys also reveal that employers are unlikely to adjust downward their entry-level job qualifications. While it is by now a cliche, it is also a fact: the jobs projected to be in demand over the next decade are those in the fastest growing sectors, (see Table 2) notably in services which are marked by growing use of new technologies. A strong employer consensus asserts that all workers will have to learn new skills and will have to know how to learn still more skills as time goes on. Which brings us to the question of what we know about the connection of skills to success in the labor market.

Table 2

SHARES OF EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP,
1960, 1979, and 1995 (In percents)

	1960	1979	1995
White Collar	43.4	50.9	53.9
Professional and technical	11.4	15.5	17.1
Managers and administrators	10.7	10.8	11.5
Sales	6.4	6.4	6.5
Clerical	14.8	18.2	18.7
Blue Collar	36.6	33.1	29.7
Craft	13.0	13.1	12.6
Operative	18.2	15.0	12.8
Laborers	5.4	4.8	4.2
Service workers	12.2	13.2	14.5
Farm Workers	7.8	2.8	2.0

Note. From "Retraining in response to labor market change: Possible sector responses" by S. Sheingold and B. Vavrichek, 1984. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the association of Public Policy Analysis & Management; and from "Occupational employment projections through 1995," by G. T. Silvestri, J. M. Lukasiewicz, and M.E. Einstein, 1983, Monthly Labor Review pp. 37-49.

What is Behind the Basic Skills-Work Connection?

Although years of school completed and recognized academic credentials, such as the high school diploma, are the best demonstrated determinants of employment success, policymakers know very little about how skills, competencies, and attitudes actually translate into positive employment situations. For example, since youth who do well in most endeavors (including work) tend to complete high school, high school graduation may simply indicate the individual's employability instead of revealing the value of a diploma for all members of a group. Furthermore, the worsening employment situation of special groups, such as black youth, cannot easily be explained by trends in skill and educational

levels. Between 1967 and 1983, for example, the gap between the percentage of black and white youth graduating from high school narrowed significantly while the racial gap in unemployment rates widened proportionately.

Researchers have not documented precisely how basic skills and added education actually help youths become and remain employed. Such an effort would have to disentangle: the effects of individual motivation from the effects of competencies; the screening role of education from its role in raising individual productivity; and the impact of skills on individual success from the impact of overall educational gains on the level and distribution of earnings.

There are several other reasons for the evident confusion about the real nature of the work-education connection. One reason is that remediation programs simply do not have a lot of experience in documenting competencies. Consider the increasing emphasis on demonstrable competencies as seen in several provisions of the Job Training Partnership Act. The same movement is developing force in education programs (e.g., mastery learning; Adult Performance Level; Competency Based High School Diploma program). These approaches are relatively new. In some ways, because of their "newness" and because they require more complex reporting procedures, measures on competency attainment have not been standardized across the country. Consequently, it is still simpler to report numbers of years of schooling completed and numbers of high school graduates, rather than measures of competence.

Another limitation to understanding the precise relationship between educational achievement and employment success is that it does not provide enough guidance on the match/mismatch that exists between what is taught in schools and other educational environments and the cognitive and problem solving skills required for job performance. Sticht (1984) and Mikulecky (1979) both have done important content analysis of reading requirements in a wide range of jobs. Both conclude that most employees in most jobs, regardless of level, are required to read considerable job-related information up to several hours each working day. Although there is some question as to what constitutes "reading material," Sticht (1974) does distinguish between academic reading to learn and more application-oriented reading done in most work situations. The work of these authors has been influential in focusing attention on the cognitive and academic skills workers actually use on the job.

In a similar vein, Sylvia Scribner (1981) has recently attempted to assess the relationship between school taught academic problem solving skills and the problem solving skills learned in the workplace. Scribner's conclusions do suggest there may not be a good match between school-learned and work-learned skills. Taken together, the work of Sticht, Mikulecky and Scribner provides a foundation for further study, but few specific guidelines for new policies.

In employment and training research, the work is just beginning. Several recent studies of program effectiveness, focused on the Job Corps, the supported work experiments, the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Programs, the Comprehensive Youth Employment Programs and others of the CETA youth demonstration era (1977-81).

All show strong positive correlations between basic skill scores, educational attainment, education "enrichment" to traditional job training programs, and positive labor market outcomes for disadvantaged program trainees. (Hahn, et al., 1984; Sum, et al, 1984; and Taggart, 1984). Indeed the correlation was so strong, and the public notice in the field so significant that basic skills have become the leitmotif of JTPA youth programs (Butler, and Darr, 1984).

Notwithstanding the growing interest in the connections between literacy basic skills and employment, there are still major problems with the research effort devoted to defining the connections. The problem emerges not least in the attempt to find consensus over definition. The common sense definition refers to a minimun level of the capacity to perform a low level job, to fill out employment applications and tax forms, and to read classified ads in newspapers. Even such a simple understanding poses problems.

One aspect of the problem centers on specifying the meaning of "functioning in society" in some objective way. Filling out applications and reading the classified ads may be unimportant to many well-functioning people in some environments within the U.S. On the other hand such a standard may be far too low to assure proper functioning in other environments. Relying on job requirements to define functioning in society is especially problematical. The immediate questions are: for which job? For jobs that open up to youth--women--whom?

A second aspect deals with attempts to measure basic skills and/or minimun competencies. Most actual test do not measure directly the student's capacity to perform "life skills' for example. Instead the tests usually measure academic skills but often not those academic skills taught adequately in schools attended by youth taking the tests. Almost never is there an objective or uncontroversial way of measuring and setting minimum levels for basic skills. What does the term "basic skills" mean? What are the "functional" basic skills? These are common sense meanings, but few useful researchable definitions.

In some ways, the measurement issues surrounding basic skills are similar to those surrounding the definition of poverty. Both concepts represent an attempt to set threshold levels below which no citizen should be found. Yet, in both cases, the threshold is likely to be set at least as much according to political and cultural standards as to objective standards.*

In sum, policymakers are confronted by a mystery--there is little agreement on how best to measure basic skills and there is little understanding on how they operate in the labor market--but basic skills do in fact play a central role in people's lives. Thus it was with despair that thousands of Americans read newspaper accounts of the National Assessment for Education Progress which found that the reading scores of youth between the ages of 13 and 17 declined in the mid-seventies. The same study found that 41.6 percent of 17 year-old black youth were functionally illiterate while over 20 percent of all urban youth were significantly deficient in key cognitive skills, compared

---

Note. Robert Lerman of the Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University, makes this analogy in a Center proposal.

with barely 10 percent of all 17-year olds. Forty million people were not proficient at reading in 1975, according to NAEP, and the figure may have grown to 72 million people today (NAEP, 1976). Nearly everyone who takes note of these findings intuitively concludes that there will be an employment impact on the illiterate individual, and an overall impact on the way the economy functions. That those impacts cannot yet be defined is more a function of the failure of research than of the validity of the questions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TOWARD A NEW AGENDA

Basic Skills Policy for the Next Decade

The convergence of public interest, business commitment, relevant program experience and research findings poses a considerable challenge, yet at the same time represents a major set of opportunities. There is clearly much work to be done to further define the public policy, program practice and research activities of the next few years. There are doubtless many ways to organize thinking about these matters; we have chosen for this essay to consider some ideas in the following two categories: 1) local practice, in education, employment and training; 2) public, especially federal, policy as practiced in Washington, D.C. and in the state capitols. We conclude this chapter by presenting the challenge of better connecting basic skills and literacy development to job training from the practitioner's perspective. This "view from the ground" suggest the urgency of embarking on some of the reforms presented in this chapter.

Improving and Focusing Local Practice

We are convinced that the most important innovations in education and in the literacy/work connection will begin at the local level; indeed, that is already so. The National Adult Literacy Project cites a wide variety of program approaches located in local agencies ranging from community and government agencies to colleges (NALP, 1984). While few of them use JTPA funds, and not all focus on employment preparation, the innovations are varied and impressive. Similarly, JTPA-funded agencies are largely left to their own local resources to design programs. Whether or not there ought to be a larger role for federal initiatives is beyond the scope of this essay; the fact is that most useful innovations start locally. With this in mind, a few suggestions follow for local planners and managers.

EXPAND THE FOCUS IN BASIC SKILLS AND LITERACY

This suggestion is directed principally at JTPA-funded programs. Despite the public focus on education, relatively few current programs for either youth or adults confront literacy or basic skill development frontally. Instead, the attention on specific job skills training for adults and youth alike ignores the plea of business partners for improved basic skills of program graduates. Therefore programs which rely on skills training at the expense of basic skills may not be meeting the needs of their constituent employers. Moreover, as cited extensively by Walker and Grinkler (1984) in their Independent Sector review of JTPA, such programs also tend to "cream", that is, to serve the least disadvantaged, most skilled of eligible people, at the expense of the more disadvantaged. A closer focus on basic skills and literacy components of overall program design can help alleviate both problems simultaneously.

Programs can respond in a variety of ways. They might:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- bring new remedial techniques (such as competency-based systems which use computer-assisted instruction) into settings which need them. JTPA's 8% funds for education/training coordination could bring such systems into training centers, vocational schools, high schools or private companies to teach people who lack basic skills (Darr, et al., 1985);

- increase access to current or expanded programs in basic skills for certain groups who currently lack access. High schools or vocational schools-using JTPA 8% or Perkins Vocational Act resources-could offer reading programs to youth and adult enrollees in JTPA-funded skills training programs;

- urge companies and community colleges to join forces to offer literacy training to employees, especially economically disadvantaged, entry-level workers;

- connect JTPA's summer jobs program to literacy centers for basic skills instruction and GED preparation. New regulations permit a carefully-planned program to operate year-round;

- Combine JTPA resources with the other federal and state funds--Adult Basic Education, Community Development Block Grant funds, Welfare Diversion funds, and Refugee Assistance funds, for example-to provide a quantum expansion in the amount of literacy education currently taking place in many local areas;

- use literacy and basic skills programs, linked with work and training, to improve school attendance and reduce dropping out. Both the Youth Incentive Entitlement Projects (funded in 1978-81 by the Department of Labor) and the Academies programs begun in Philadelphia and replicated now in Palo Alto, Portland and Pittsburgh suggest strongly that such "school-conditioned" training programs, coupled with basic skills training, can have significant positive affects on attendance and dropout prevention. (Hahn and Lerman, 1985).

Increase Services to Dropouts and Adults

Despite their importance, long-term improvements in public education will not benefit those who have already left school. Whether dropouts or graduates, a disturbing number of youth and adults are out of school without skills, especially literacy skills. A variety of techniques have been developed over the last several years for providing instruction to youth and adults in non-school settings, ranging from small classrooms using conventional paper and pencil materials to open-entry/open exit computer-assisted instruction to individual tutoring by volunteers. Such programs may offer an adult diploma, a GED or some form of credentialed, competency based education. An increasing number combine individualized instruction with counseling, job training and job

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

placement, often in a community-based setting. But taken all together, the programs which exist serve only a small fraction of the people eligible and needful of such services. Such services need to be dramatically expanded and their number increased. We believe that two approaches to such services are especially useful in the current context.

- Many more alternative education settings and services need to be devised for younger school dropouts who will not return to the same schools they dropped out from, but who have not been out of school so long that an alternative school, per se, will be unattractive. Such programs can be operated by community agencies (such as the 47-organization School Network in Chicago), by schools (with a variety of school-with-in-school approaches such as one can usually find in any progressive district), or by a combination of community programs taught by accredited instructors teaching in a community setting but offering an accredited diploma from a home-base high school, such as is done in several cities, including Boston. The Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP) developed by the Remediation Training Institute of Alexandria offers a good organizational and curriculum management approach for such settings (it is used in the Chicago network). The CCP approach and others now make it easier to teach basic skills in alternative settings without simply duplicating the way young people were taught in the schools they left*

- Much more basic education for adults needs to be included in job training programs, and the reverse--linking of the present ABE services to job training--should also be attempted more often. Two behavioral tendencies among adults motivate this suggestion. First, while alternative schools may be attractive to young people with friends still in school, older youths and young adults need different approaches. Second, while it should not be over stressed, a significant proportion of adults who are interested in improving literacy skills are also interested in improving their employment situation. We need to provide an alternative for large numbers of young adults, who are past the realistic hope of completing a conventional high school diploma, who lack the skills for a college degree, but who want to upgrade their generic and job skills to improve everything from self-confidence to employment prospects (Yin, 1985; Adult Education Act Amendment, S. 2496, 1985).

Note. Bills before Congress would send categorical aid to secondary schools with enrollments of at least 20 percent disadvantaged students and thereby encourage local schools to develop alternative learning environments within the regular school system. See, for example, H.R. 5749 and S. 2422.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DEVISE OUTCOME-DIRECTED APPROACHES AND MEANINGFUL CREDENTIALS

High schools grant successful graduates a high school diploma or students can pass a performance test and receive an equivalency diploma. As we pointed out earlier, employers have come to rely on these credentials for basic hiring decisions, using them as a sort of "threshold" requirement for most jobs. Even though the precise standards of performance they (especially the regular diploma) represent are often unknown, the credential is taken quite seriously in practice. The challenge for the combined education and employment training communities is to devise teaching approaches and credentials which over time will come to represent a credible statement of performance and competence. The good news is that there is considerable momentum in both systems for competency-based approaches to learning and teaching. However, the developments have largely occurred on separate tracks without sufficient sharing of information.

The system of programs supported under JTPA is relatively new to the competency movement and could learn much from public schools and many adult educators. JTPA calls for youth programs to have performance standards and measures which will accurately reflect what is taught in programs. It also calls for the programs to address competencies which are recognized by the private industry councils. While it is not certain, it is likely that adult educators will help to develop a credential which certifies some given set of competencies as outcomes from their programs. We have a couple of suggestions to make in this regard:

- Local educators and employment training professionals should collaborate to design a joint credential which reflects the competencies taught in their programs. Consider the degree to which this is a "career passport" or certificate of employability, and consider whether it has subparts, such as a certificate of functional literacy, or some such phrase indicating the successful accomplishment of joint objectives.

- Planners should be prepared to offer or obtain considerable technical assistance in this development. The financial incentives for technical assistance in JTPA, ABE and other systems are missing. Such help will be provided only if program planners and managers demand and articulate the need for it.

It is possible that the impetus to develop coordinated credentials will also spur the movement to get adult educators, people interested in general education, basic skills experts, and employment and training people to work together at the local level. This is happening in a number of places such as in Los Angeles, where the City of Los Angeles Private Industry Council, the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles Community College are collaborating with Brandeis University's Center for Human Resources to develop common competency-based instructional systems and working towards a coordinated, if not joint, means of credentialling program graduates in Los Angeles employment and education programs for the disadvantaged. Similarly, in Connecticut, the

State Department of Education is taking the lead in an effort to tie together educators and employment and training professionals in a network designed to develop competency-based approaches and to share information statewide, with the help of the National Youth Practitioners' Network. Both New York State and Indiana have set up systems of peer trainers who work across departmental lines at the state level and across bureaucracies locally to provide assistance in developing competency-based education and job training.

DEVISE COHERENT SYSTEMS OF LOCAL SERVICES

Sometimes it seems as if there is a separate state and local agency, and a separate set of programs (all underfunded from the practitioner's perspective, of course) for each symptom. Illiterate adults, school dropouts, young parents receiving AFDC, young criminal offenders all have separate needs, to be sure, but also have many needs in common - for literacy and job training, for support and counseling, for connections and networking. In most communities our responses are not merely inadequate in volume, they are also fragmented and uncoordinated.*

There are a number of program options which link educational institutions with business, government or community agencies to provide new services or to devise new innovations. One goal which has often eluded planners is to join together different services into a coherent sequence which can guide a person through the right options for the person's different needs. This is especially important because research has shown that the gains provided from short duration remedial programs often decay unless efforts are focused on follow-up and a logical sequence of services and training (Berlin, 1983). Even if there were adequate separate services, the system can not be said to work if particular groups such as dropouts, illiterate adults or young parents slip through the cracks.

There is no substitute for willing collaboration among like-minded people attempting to accomplish similar things. Yet many factors impede effective local collaboration. Competition for scarce funds, different jargon and inferred conflicting values (is literacy taught for its own sake, or is it utilitarian and job related?), and preoccupation with one's own or one's agency's economic survival seem to represent the greatest barriers to joint action. There are, given some general good will, a few good starting points for building a coherent system.

Note. Concern for fragmentation should also extend to private sector responses to illiteracy. Private franchises or "learning centers" are expanding and will have to be included in attempts to reform the local delivery system. Also, the voluntary sector is very important in this equation. The Laubach Literacy Action organization, for example, is comprised of 600 small voluntary programs in 46 states. A new nationwide Literacy Campaign of the Advertising Council hopes to attract 25,000 volunteers nationwide (Venture Magazine, May 1984, p. 161).

- Every education or training agency has some approach to assessment and testing (or if they don't, they should). Since this is an early point in decisions about program assignment for clients, it can also be a point of collaborative effort. If each community agency or educational institution has its own assessment and program assignment system, there will be a series of closed systems in the community, with each program assessing or testing applicants with an eye to how they fit into their own program, rather than seeking to make some judgement about the real needs of that applicant, and to assess which of a varied menu of program responses is appropriate. Certainly referral takes place frequently, and only rarely does the extreme version of the "closed system" really occur, but opening a system through shared assessment, testing and mutual decision making about program enrollment surely is feasible and preferable. It may also have the advantage of making it possible to share costs of such facilities and staff in this era of too few resources for client services.

- Developing a jointly accepted credential, as described earlier, can provide a point of entry to collaboration and coherence among services. If a group of agencies offering services have begun to collaborate on assessment, they may easily segue into devising interim, competency-based measures for student progress and from there to a collectively, endorsed credential acknowledging program completion and competency attainment. It will be virtually essential for such a group to develop a purposeful division of labor and sequence of services with points of choice and measurement along the way as appropriate.

- Designing systems of coordinated outplacement can help tie together services in an organized way. Whether job placement, further education or training are the appropriate next step for individual students, designing a system whereby referrals and placement are coordianted among all agencies enhance the possibility that the student will be well served with a maximum number of options.

In short, we are convinced that developing a local system requires collaboration over input (assessment and program assignment) and output processes (credentialling competencies, and outplacement). Each separate service thus retains its option of designing services it is good at delivering, while the overall system actually evolves towards being a purposeful system, with the coherent sequence of services which provide maximum choice for individual students or participants. We also believe that the next several years will see most of the innovations in these fields spring from the local areas. Waiting for national government leadership to dictate program designs will not yield much fruit. While communities across the nation share much in common, they also differ in important ways. What works in Portland will not work in Detroit, and neither approach is likely to be replicated in Birmingham, though all three have much to learn from each other. But elements of their

separate experiences may offer real lessons for public policy which federal and state agencies could help to understand and disseminate to others.

Refining Federal Policy and Increasing Resources

The federal government brings four elements to this enterprise: access to a multi-state overview of policies and practices; leverage through initiative and regulation; financial resources to attack problems at scale; and potential visible leadership. A judicious use of all of these would make a signal contribution to this field. We have several suggestions, all designed to facilitate the development of the kinds of local systems for education and employment we think can help solve the problems described in this essay.

If resources and programs are fragmented locally, they are doubly splintered at the federal level. And HHS, DOL, USOE, and the rest of the federal agencies are larger, more intractable and utterly inexperienced at collaboration. Thus employment and training programs are in the province of the Department of Labor, vocational and adult education are the Department of Education's (though separately administered) and separated then again from postsecondary education. The runaway youth programs are in HHS and the drug enforcement and criminal justice agencies hardly ever meet. The current literacy initiative and the Job Training Partnership Act, both priorities of the current Administration, have no evident relationship, besides the obvious theoretical ones.

We have, therefore, several suggestions for addressing the fragmentation problem:

- Focus federal resources--attention, public notice as well as money--on the connection between education, (especially literacy) and employment and training. While there are some logical divisions for concentration, lack of current coordination is an artifact of bureaucratic division and inertia and should not be fostered or allowed to continue. One might imagine that the two efforts could be coordinated through some division of labor, with the Department of Education focusing primarily on educational services to inschool youth and ABE to adults, with some additional attention to the transition from school to work. Meanwhile DOL can focus its education and job training work on out-of-school youth and under--employed adults. But since all the groups mentioned have needs which are both educational and job related, the two agencies have not only to divide the turf, they need to find ways to collaborate over their common customers. For example, a joint project might involve the USOE, US DOL, and Census Bureau to study how best to survey the extent of illiteracy through the national census.

- Develop a mechanism for interagency coordination, especially between the Department of Education and Labor. This should have a visible White House backing, and be responsible for policy development and for implementation oversight for literacy and

employment and training. It should begin with the objective of of tying policy and program together in these fields. We are not naive about how hard this is to do, given the separate departmental histories, but that does not diminish its importance.

- There is no way to avoid the observation that more financial resources will be needed. The Literacy Initiative relies excessively on volunteers and leaves unanswered the questions of inadequately funded local literacy services. ABE resources could be reorganized, but they are already stretched to the breaking point. JTPA agencies and private industry councils are fast developing the capacity envisioned for resources for job training and basic skills education. The employer constituency JTPA is now building will soon, we predict, demand better attention to basic skills and literacy.

- More weight should be put behind the competency movement, both in education and in employment and training. The stress on learning outcomes is the closest thing to a "bottom line" that education knows, and it ought to receive continued stress and support from the government agencies which support and oversee literacy development and job training. If that were coordinated support from DOL and ED together, so much the better.

- Technical assistance and support for professional development are absolutely necessary in these fields and should be enabled by the federal government. These efforts will require funds--for assistance, for dissemination, for training or professional staff--but even more importantly will require initiative and leadership. Both have been sorely lacking in the implementation of JTPA and of the literacy initiative, but it would not be difficult to plan effective initiatives that would not be too costly.

Much initiative, innovation and leadership can begin locally, indeed, we expect much to occur in the next several years which does begin at the local level. But there is no other organization equipped with a perspective that includes all fifty states, which has a policy-development mechanism which is national, or which can promote interstate exchanges of information about programs that work, changes in technology, the workplace, the populations needing service, or the standards which are possible. Only the federal government can play these roles. In our view, the retrenchment has gone too far; the time has come for the federal government to once again define a leader's role in this important field.

Program Linkages in One City - The Practitioners' Perspective

This essay has presented the problem of better linking remediation services and job training and it has described a variety of options for reform. The necessity of moving forward with this agenda for reform is experienced everyday by the dedicated professionals who work in the nation's remediation

and training programs. The following is a "worm's-eye" view from the practitioners' perspective of the problems and needed reforms.

In greater Boston, as in countless cities across the country, there has been a renewed commitment to literacy for all groups. This stems from Boston's educational renewal effort, the Boston Compact, form an active city manpower agency, and from a progressive business community-the Boston Private Industry Council.

The goal of the city funded basic skills programs is to offer an occupational focus to basic educational instruction and to serve residents whose lack of basic competencies, English language skills, or high school certification impede their labor force entry and mobility. But Boston's program directors recognize the many practical dilemmas facing job relevant basic skills programs.

One dilemma involves tying what is taught to what is needed. As described in this essay, the new buzzword in literacy programs is "competency-based". But Dr. Shirley Higgins Fall of Boston's lead poverty agency asks for "more research to be done on what kinds of vocabulary, grade level requirements, and specific skills are really required before one can learn a specific job". Other directors of programs told the authors that JTPA job entrance requirements do not accurately reflect what is needed on the job. Often the grade level competency required for job training seems too high. On the other hand, the directors referred to some young people who graduate from JTPA training programs fully able to do the job, but remain at a disadvantage because they weren't advised to get the GED as well as the job training.

Boston area literacy programs have put more emphasis on support programs to help people stay in literacy classes. This has led to providing counseling, referrals, networking with other agencies, and other types of support for those enrolled. WEAVE, a program for welfare mothers based in Roxbury, has an excellent reputation for sticking by its students. Ms. Faye Johnson, the assistant director explained their success.

> We have more than 25 people on our waiting list all of the time. We're good. We care. People won't go to other classes, they'll wait for an opening because they've heard this is the place. Our classes are more intense. We expect people to be here five hours a day, four days a week. When someone misses a class, one of us visits her at her home. We go with clients to court hearings to help them get their kids back. We call the welfare office with her. We get involved.

Despite such efforts, there are still problems coordinating with existing service providers. The Department of Public Welfare, for example, plays a central role in whether or not someone stays enrolled in a literacy program. And links with the Massachusetts Department of Rehabilatation, the Department of Mental Health, or even other literacy programs can also break down. One practitioner tells the story of Teresa (not her real name) who was enrolled in a Boston literacy program and was living at a halfway house for recovering

drug abusers. She had completed two GED tests in six months, but then the Department of Mental Health eliminated her tutor from her half-way house program. After the tutor left, no one at the half-way house was there to help her. When encouragement to attend classes stopped, Teresa did as well.

The practitioners stressed that it takes considerable energy and time to develop effective links between basic skills and job training programs. One director recounted how one of her employment counselors searched for weeks for a training program for literacy center graduates. One barrier which prevents the channeling of more people from literacy programs to employment and training programs is that students, especially males, run out of time--they cannot afford to stay out of the labor market long enough to bring both their literacy level and training skills up to the levels necessary to get good paying jobs. Financial incentives for completion of literacy programs are important along with funds to cover the transportation costs to and from literacy centers and job training. Johnson, at the WEAVE program for welfare mothers, said it was the "little things" that mattered such as better transportation, no-wait daycare, and the scheduling of welfare appointments on days when basic skills classes are not being held.

State policies contain many perverse incentives for completing literacy programs. The Department of Public Welfare often makes it more difficult for students to stay enrolled in literacy programs. According to one professional, "Marilyn passed all her GED tests, and was actually cut from her welfare grant because she was to get a college (Pell) grant. But since Marilyn couldn't wait three months without income for her college money, she lost her chance to attend community college."

Another aspect affecting linkage is that certain employment and training programs are more heavily funded and promoted than others. The professionals often noted that computer training programs are twice as expensive as other types of training programs and the jobs they lead to are often inaccessible to graduates.

Despite the myriad obstacles for effective linkage at the local level between basic skills providers and employment/training programs, the services which are delivered often have enormous impact on peoples' lives.

The potential is great for expanding the following local success stories:

- Shirley, 27 was an alcoholic. She quit drinking with assistance from a basic skills program. Although she was a high school dropout, she passed five GED tests in sixteen weeks. She was awarded a part-time welfare-funded internship as a clerk at a human service agency. She practiced typing in her off-hours and is now a full time paid secretary with another human service agency.

- Jim, 19, entered a poverty agency's learning center distraught because the autobody training school that he'd been saving money to attend turned him down because he couldn't read. With effort, Jim raised his reading level from grade two to grade six. He got information about

another autobody repair school which would pay him as an apprentice, while he learned. He was accepted and happily entered that program.

- Gwen, 66, enjoyed learning and socializing with other students at the basic skills program. She attended classes for nine years to complete her GED. Now confident of her abilities, she is a volunteer tutor to elementary school children through a program in which the elderly work with the public schools.

- Roberta came from Puerto Rico three years ago. She had a series of part-time jobs, but when she couldn't pay her rent, she was evicted. Homeless and with three small children to support, she was forced to put her children into foster care. A cousin mailed her some money for living expenses and she enrolled in a basic education program for grades one to three. After six months of diligent study, she completed the basic education program as well as the job readiness program. She landed a welfare-funded placement as a bank clerk and petitioned the state to get her children back. Today, she has her children back, has a home, and her own permanent job. She is saving month by month for a reunion back in Puerto Rico.

REFERENCES

Berlin, G. (1983). The role of remedial education in improving school achievement, job training, and future employment. New York: Ford Foundation.

Butler, E., & Darr, J. (1984, December). Re-examining the federal experience with youth employment: What are the managerial lessons? Washington, DC: National Academy of Science.

Butler, E. & Darr, J. (1979). [Summary]. Report on education/private sector roundtable. The vice president's task force on youth employment. Waltham. MA: Brandeis University.

Center for Public Resources. (1982, November). Basic skills in the U.S. work force. New York: Author.

Center for Social Organizations of Schools. (1984). The quality of American high school graduates: What personnel officers say and do about it. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Congressional Budget Office. (1982). Improving youth employment prospects: Issues and options. Washington DC: Author.

Crain, R. (1982, May 9). Functional literacy and the workplace. American Council of Life Insurance. Proceedings of a national invitational conference.

Darr, J., Hahn, A., & Oterman, P. (1985, January). Getting one hundred percent results from the eight percent education set-aside under the Job Training Partnership Act. Washington DC: National Governors Association. The "eight percent" funds refer to the component of JTPA legislation that reserves funds for collaboration with education programs.

Education Commission of the States and the Colorado Department of Education. (1984, July). Action in the states. A report by the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth. Denver, CO: Golden Press.

Hahn, A. & Lerman, R. (in press) What works in youth employment? How to help young workers from poor families. Washington, DC: National planning associates.

Jobstart. (1985). Working papers for a design of JOBSTART. New York, manpower demonstration research corporation. Author.

Johnson, J. (1984). A Youth employment policy: Background discussion. Washington DC: National Commission on Employment Policy.

Mikulecky, L. (1979). Literacy competencies and youth employment. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

National Alliance of Business (1984). A nation at work: Education and the private sector. Washington, DC: Author.

National Academy of Science. (1984). High schools and the changing workplace: The employers view. Washington, DC: Author.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (1976). Survey of functional literacy. Washington, DC: Author.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk. The imperative for education reform. Washington, DC: Author.

National Council on Employment Policy. (1983, October). Back to basics. Washington, DC: Author.

Scribner, S. (1981, June). Studying working intelligence. New York, NY: The graduate center, City University.

Silvestri, G.T., Lukasiewicz, J.M., & Einstein, M.E. "Occupational employment projections through 1995." (1983, November). Monthly Labor Review. 37-49.

Sheingold, S., & Vavrichek, B. (1984, October). Retraining in response to labor market change: Possible sector responses. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Public Policy Analysis & Management. Washington, DC.: Congressional Budget Office, US Congress.

Stitch, T., ed. (1974). Reading for working: A functional literacy anthology. Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization.

Sum, A., et al. (1983). Educational attainment, academic ability, and the employability and earnings of young persons: Implications for the planning and design of JTPA youth programs. Paper prepared for a MDRC/NAB symposium on serving disadvantaged youth. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University.

Taggert, R. (1984). An overview of the comprehensive competencies program. Alexandria, VA: Remediation and Training Institute.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for education reform. Washington, DC: US government printing office.

The NETWORK, Inc. (1984, Summer). Symposium in North Hampton, Massachusetts literacy policy researchers. Meeting conducted by the National Adult Literacy Project. Andover, MA: Author.

Venture Magazine, (1984, May). Franchises teach Johnny to read.

Walker-Grinkler Associates. (1984). An independent assessment of JTPA phase one: The initial transition. New York: Author.

Yin, R. K., et al. (1982, January). To find an education: New options for adult basic education programs. National Center for the Study of Professions. Author.